

Gutsy Gauff fights back to beat Sabalenka, clinch French Open

The second-ranked American dug deep to claim a 6-7 (5/7), 6-2, 6-4 victory and her second major title after also defeating Aryna at the 2023 US Open

AFP, PARIS: Coco Gauff battled back from a set down to beat World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka in a Grand Slam final for the second time with a dramatic victory in the French Open showpiece on Saturday.

The second-ranked American dug deep to claim a 6-7 (5/7), 6-2, 6-4 victory and her second major title after also defeating Sabalenka at the 2023 US Open. The 21-year-old more than made amends for her emotional 2022 final loss to Iga Swiatek at Roland Garros, outlasting Sabalenka over two hours and 38 minutes on Court Philippe Chatrier.



"I was going through a lot of things when I lost in this final three years ago. I'm just happy to be here," said Gauff. "I didn't think honestly that I could do it... I think I was lying to myself that I definitely could do it."

It was a second straight Grand Slam final loss for Sabalenka after her defeat by Madison Keys at the Aus-



US Coco Gauff holds the trophy after winning the French Open tennis tournament women's singles final match against Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka, on Court Philippe-Chatrier at the Roland-Garros Complex in Paris on Saturday

tralian Open in January.

Gauff was rock solid after falling a set down, while Sabalenka made 70 unforced errors in windy conditions in a match which followed a very similar pattern to Gauff's victory at Flushing Meadows two years ago.

"Obviously it hurts so

much, especially after such a tough two weeks when I played such great tennis in these terrible conditions," said Sabalenka, whose unforced error tally in the final was the highest by any player in a women's match this tournament.

"To show such terrible

tennis in the final, it does really hurt."

Belarusian Sabalenka was aiming to become the only current women's player to win three of the four Grand Slam events after her US Open triumph last year and back-to-back Australian Open titles in 2023 and 2024.

Sinner ends Djokovic record bid, to face Alcaraz in final

AFP, PARIS: Jannik Sinner battled past Novak Djokovic in a gripping French Open semi-final on Friday to book a first Grand Slam final meeting with reigning champion Carlos Alcaraz after the Spaniard saw off Lorenzo Musetti.

World number one Sinner held off a record-chasing Djokovic with an impressive 6-4, 7-5, 7-6 (7/3) win on Court Philippe Chatrier to reach his maiden Roland Garros final.

Djokovic showed his trademark fighting qualities in a dramatic contest that lasted three hours and 16 minutes, but three missed set points late in the third set ultimately put paid to his hopes of a comeback.

The 38-year-old will next attempt to win a record-breaking 25th Grand Slam title at Wimbledon next month.

Alcaraz earlier booked his place in Sunday's final when opponent Musetti retired with a leg injury in the fourth set of their last-four tie.

Sinner, who is yet to

drop a set in the tournament, will be hoping to gain revenge on Alcaraz after losing to the Spaniard in five sets in the semi-finals last year.

Djokovic's exit ensures that a sixth successive major title will be lifted by either Sinner or world number two Alcaraz, in what appears increasingly likely to be a permanent changing of the guard.

Sunday will see the first Grand Slam final to be played between two men born in the 2000s.

Neither Sinner or Alcaraz have ever lost a major final.

It is also the first Grand Slam tournament in which the top two seeds will contest both the men's and women's finals since the 2013 US Open, with Aryna Sabalenka and Coco Gauff set to face off for the Coupe Suzanne Lenglen on Saturday.

Djokovic had his chances, but Sinner consistently proved too strong in the key moments, including when breaking immediately after failing to serve out the second set.

Carlsen wins Norway Chess title for 7th time

Gukesh blunders against Caruana

PTI, STAVANGER (Norway): World champion D Gukesh committed a costly blunder against American Grandmaster Fabiano Caruana in the final round to finish third, as five-time world champion Magnus Carlsen clinched a record-extending seventh Norway Chess title here.

Gukesh, after being in a disadvantageous position against 2018 Norway Chess champion Fabiano Caruana, tried to stage a late comeback but ran out of time and committed a blunder, instantly realising his chances had slipped away.

Gukesh offered a handshake, grimaced, closed his eyes, and buried his face in both hands in frustration.

It was a golden opportunity for the young Indian world champion to win his maiden Norway Chess title in only his second appearance, after a roller-coaster tournament that saw him start on a poor note before turning things around with impressive Classical wins over Magnus Carlsen, compatriot Arjun Erigaisi, and China's Wei Yi.

Defending champion

Carlsen, who was the overnight leader with 15 points after round 9, ended the tournament with 16 points after fashioning the great escape against GM Erigaisi and steering the game to a draw in the 10th round.

Gukesh finished third -- the same as in the 2023 edition -- with 14.5 points, while Caruana was second with 15.5 points. Erigaisi finished fifth with 13 points.

Erigaisi won the Armageddon tie-break against Carlsen following the miraculous draw by the Norwegian, but it did not matter in the end as the five-time world champion had already secured a point with the stalemate to win the title.

While Gukesh quietly walked out of the arena after losing to Caruana, Carlsen said he had to literally fight for his life to stay in the match against Arjun Erigaisi.

In the women's section, two-time world blitz champion, Ukraine's Anna Muzychuk won the title with 16.5 points despite an Armageddon tie-break loss to India's R. Vaishali in the final round.

shorttakes

Thakur, Nitish Reddy go wicketless as England Lions pile 192/3 against India A

NORTHAMPTON: India A pace bowling all-rounders Shardul Thakur and Nitish Kumar Reddy continued to dish out underwhelming performances as the England Lions made 192 for three at the end of second day of the second unofficial Test, here, on Saturday. India A, overnight 319/7, were folded for 348 in their first innings, but fifties of Tom Haines (54, 88 balls) and Emilio Gay (71, 117 balls) helped the Lions to reduce the deficit to 156 runs when the stumps were drawn early because of bad light. The Indian think-tank will be a tad concerned about the inability of Thakur and Reddy to take wickets, as both are in contention for the lone pace-bowling all-rounder's slot in the India team for the five-match Test series against England. In the first four-day match at Canterbury, Thakur took two wickets but leaked 105 runs in 28 overs while Reddy's lone wicket came at the cost of 63 runs in 14.5 overs. Thakur bowled six wicketless overs, while Reddy, despite managing bit of swing occasionally, failed to take wickets in his six overs on the day. Brief Scores: India A 1st innings: 348 all out vs England Lions 1st innings: 192/3 in 46 overs; (Tom Haines 54, Emilio Gay 71; Anshul Kamboj 1/38, Tushar Deshpande 1/44, Tanush Kotian 1/21).

Asian champion 100m hurdler Yarraji leads India's 6-gold show in Taiwan Open

TAIPEI CITY: Asian champion Jyothi Yarraji won the women's 100m hurdles race with yet another impressive time as India won six gold medals in the Taiwan Open international athletics competition, here, on Saturday. National record holder Yarraji clocked 12.99 seconds to pocket the gold at the Taipei Municipal Stadium, ahead of Japanese runners Asuka Terada (13.04 seconds) and Chisato Kiyoyama (13.10 seconds), who took the silver and bronze respectively. Another national record holder, Tejas Shirse also won gold in the men's 110m hurdles, clocking 13.52 seconds, the second fastest time of his career. Local athletes Hsieh Yuan-kai (13.72 seconds) and Kuei-Ru Chen (13.75 seconds) won the silver and bronze respectively. India's best 4x100m relay quartet of Gurinder Singh, Animesh Kujur, Manikanta Hoblihar and Amlan Borgohain won gold, clocking 38.75 seconds, just six-hundredths of a second outside of the national record of 38.69 seconds set by the same team at the National Relay Carnival in Chandigarh earlier this year. The Indian team of Sudheeksha Vadluri, Sneha Sathyanarayana Shanuwalli, Abhinaya Rajarajan and Nithya Gandhi won gold in the women's 4x100m relay, clocking 44.06 seconds. Abdulla Aboobacker and Pooja also won gold in the men's triple jump and women's 1500m respectively.

Indian delegation meets Commonwealth Sport officials in London on 2030 Games bid

MUMBAI: A delegation of Indian Olympic Association, Central and Gujarat State government met Commonwealth Sport officials in London to have a better understanding of the process and the framework relating to securing hosting rights of the 2030 Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad. The delegation included IOA Chief PT Usha and officials from the Union Sports Ministry as well as the Gujarat state government. They met the Commonwealth Sport officials over two days in London. While the proposals for the final bid are expected to be submitted by August 31, the selection of the host city for CWG 2030 will be made by Commonwealth Sport in November this year. India has already formally submitted its bid to conduct the 2030 Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad with an eye on hosting the Olympic Games in 2036 in the same city.

Spain-Portugal final more than just Cristiano vs Yamal, says Ronaldo

MUNICH: Portugal captain Cristiano Ronaldo acknowledged he was "another generation" to Spain starlet Lamine Yamal but said Sunday's Nations League final was more than just a battle between the duo. The final in Munich has been framed as a showdown between veteran Ronaldo, 40, one of the game's biggest names, and 17-year-old Yamal, the most exciting young talent in world football. Ronaldo said the focus on the two individuals was overblown, calling Spain "maybe the best national team in the world". "There are different generations, one is coming in and another is exiting the stage. If you want to see me as another generation, then that's OK". "When you talk about a clash between Cristiano and someone else, that's not how it works. The media always try to hype things up, which is a normal thing, but it's one team versus another team." "You've been talking about Lamine a lot and you're right to do so because he's very good," Ronaldo told journalists, adding "but I'd like to talk about the team." "They've got Nico Williams, great midfielders like Pedri and their coach (Luis) de la Fuente is very good, very strong, very disciplined."

Team India lands in UK for 5-Test series against England

PTI, LONDON: The Indian cricket team has arrived in the United Kingdom for its much-anticipated five-match Test series against England, starting later this month.

The series is part of the 2025-27 ICC World Test Championship cycle. Team India departed for the UK from Mumbai on Friday night.

A new-look Indian side will be led by newly-appointed skipper Shubman Gill, marking the beginning of a new era following the recent retirements of stalwarts Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli.

Several Indian players had already reached England as part of the India A squad currently engaged in a three-match unofficial Test series against England Lions.

"It's good to be a part of the Indian cricket team, especially in a Test series. Welcome to the UK," newcomer Sai Sudharsan said in a video posted by the BCCI on 'X'.

The first Test will be played in Leeds from June 20, followed by matches in Birmingham (July 2-6), Lord's (July 10-14), Manchester (July 23-27), and The Oval (August 4-8).

India men lose to Netherlands in Euro leg of FIH Pro League

PTI, AMSTELVEEN (Netherlands): The Indian men's hockey team squandered a one goal lead to lose 1-2 to Olympic champions Netherlands in the first match of the European leg of FIH Pro League, here, on Saturday.

The Netherlands struck the winning goal two minutes from the final whistle through Van Dam Thijs (58th minute), who also scored the equalising goal in the 25th minute. Captain Harmanpreet Singh had converted the first penalty corner of the match in the 19th minute to give India the lead.

India began the match on a strong note, dominating possession with crisp passing despite Netherlands' high press.

While the first eight minutes didn't yield any real threats on goal from either side, India got an opportunity soon after as they won the ball in the Dutch circle.

Dilpreet Singh's reverse hit, however, was shut down at close range by Dutch goalkeeper Maurits Visser.

At the other end, Netherlands

threatened late in the first quarter as Thierry Brinkman approached the right flank, but the Indian defence stood firm to avert the danger. The Netherlands came out with intent in the second quarter, with Steijn van Heijningen testing Suraj Karkera in the 17th minute, only for the Indian goalkeeper to block the effort.

India responded with purpose and was rewarded with a penalty corner after Dilpreet was impeded by a stick challenge inside the cir-

HOCKEY

cle. Captain Harmanpreet stepped up and fired a powerful, low shot to give India the lead.

As the second quarter progressed, India exhibited a tight defensive formation, but the home team managed to get the breakthrough in the 25th minute with Thijs van Dam finding the equaliser, leaving the scores at 1-1 before half-time.

As the second half began, India's strong passing game was at the

centre of proceedings, but the visitors were encumbered by a lack of clear scoring opportunities and shots on goal.

To break the deadlock, India looked to bypass the midfield with long aerial balls, but the Dutch defence were up to the task.

At the other end, the Netherlands grew increasingly assertive, posing more questions of the Indian backline, though the scores remained 1-1 after a tepid third quarter.

The Netherlands had the lion's share of possession in the final quarter, and the hosts made it count. Thijs van Dam struck again in the 58th minute, making the most of a well-placed pass into the circle. With a deft first touch to control, he followed up with a fierce strike, ensuring victory for Netherlands.

India will face Netherlands again on Monday in the second match of the European leg.

India played the home leg of the ongoing Pro League in Bhubaneswar earlier this year, where they amassed 15 points with five wins in eight games.

Lee likely to become India's archery head coach

PTI, KOLKATA: Legendary Korean coach KiSik Lee, who led the USA to over 300 World Cup medals and three Olympic podium finishes, is all set to take charge as India's national archery head coach on a three-year contract in the lead-up to the Los Angeles Games 2028, a top Archery Association of India official confirmed to PTI on Saturday.

The 67-year-old Lee has been shortlisted for the top job in the recurve section and the proposal has been forwarded to the Sports Authority of India (SAI) for final approval.

"Given his outstanding resume, he is the ideal candidate to guide India towards its first-ever Olympic medal in archery," the official said. "We've had several rounds of discussions with him, and he has agreed to commit to India till LA 2028."

Italy thrashed by Norway, Belgium held

AFP, PARIS: Italy crashed to a 3-0 loss away to Norway as the four-time champions made a disastrous start to their 2026 World Cup qualifying campaign Friday, while Belgium had to settle for a draw in North Macedonia.

Alexander Sorloth, Antonio Nusa and Erling Haaland all scored in the first half in pouring rain in Oslo as Norway made it a night to forget for Italy, who missed out on the last two World Cups.

WORLD CUP QUALIFYING

"I have no explanation. Our supporters don't deserve this kind of match. We need to do some soul-searching. It's unacceptable," Italy captain and goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma told Rai Sport.

Italy are playing catch-up with Norway, the Group I leaders with a maximum nine points after wins over Moldova and Israel in March when the Azzurri



Norway's goalkeeper Orjan Haskjold Nyland makes a save during the 2026 FIFA World Cup Qualifying Group I match against Italy at the Utlevaal Stadium in Oslo

were still involved in the UEFA Nations League.

Israel are second on six

points after a 3-1 win over Estonia in Tallinn, where Norway will head for their

next game on Monday. Italy

return home to face Moldova in Reggio Emilia in their

second game.

Belgium kicked off their qualifying bid in Group J with a 1-1 draw against North Macedonia.

Maxim De Cuyper gave Belgium the lead after Romelu Lukaku's shot was blocked but former Leeds man Ezgjan Alioski volleyed in the equaliser with four minutes to play in Skopje.

North Macedonia are unbeaten through three matches but trail Wales, who top the pile on seven points following a 3-0 home win over Liechtenstein.

Joe Rodon, Harry Wilson and Kieffer Moore struck in Cardiff to keep Wales unbeaten since the appointment last year of Craig Bellamy, whose side head to

Brussels next week.

Croatia hammered Gibraltar 7-0 in their opening match in Group J.

Substitutes Franjo Ivanovic and Andrej Kramaric both scored twice, with Marco Pasalic, Ante Budimir and Ivan Perisic also on target in the Algarve.

Czech Republic are the pacesetters in the section with three wins from three after a 2-0 victory at home to Montenegro. Adam Hlozek and Patrik Schick got the goals for the hosts.

The 12 group winners qualify automatically for next year's expanded 48-team tournament, while the runners-up head into the play-offs which will decide the final four qualifiers from Europe.

EUROPEAN WORLD CUP QUALIFYING RESULTS

Group I: Norway 3 (Sorloth 14, Nusa 34, Haaland 42) Italy 0, Estonia 1 (Kait 31) Israel 3 (Biton 39, 49, Abu Fani 90-pen). Group J: Wales 3 (Rodon 40, Wilson 65, Moore 68) Liechtenstein 0, North Macedonia 1 (Alioski 86) Belgium 1 (De Cuyper 28). Group L: Czech Republic 2 (Hlozek 23, Schick 65) Montenegro 0, Gibraltar 0 Croatia 7 (Pasalic 28, Budimir 30, Ivanovic 60, 63, Perisic 73, Ivanovic 77, 79)